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Tensions Without Solutions: Romanian-Hungarian Relations, 1987-89

Abstract

Up to the middle of the 1980, Hungary gave refugees to the world; but from 1987, the country itself has also been admitting refugees. Between 1988 and 1995, more than 130,000 refugees were registered in the country. The number of those who arrived in Hungary and looked for the support of private persons, not registering themselves at the authorities can be much more. Among the reasons arising in the Hungarian-Romanian relationship, the first place was occupied by violent urbanization, the organized destruction of villages in Romania that began in 1987. Furthermore, the practice of Ceausescu's dictatorship violating human rights also played a serious role, paired with the discrimination against Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities. The increasing number of social and economic problems is also one of the important factors of migration motives. The immigration of Romanian citizens demanded measures of border control, administrative control, state security and public safety from the part of the Hungarian law enforcement bodies, while the negotiations between the "allied parties" was also needed as much as diplomatic and international political solutions. During the examination of the complex problems of the migration process, the present research intends to turn the attention towards three characteristic motions, based on the contemporary documents: the secret service and political means of the realization of the Romanian urbanization program, the "events" occurring along Hungarian-Romanian borders, and the differences between the techniques of treating refugee affairs.

Key words: border control operations, collapse of communism, ethnic problems, Helsinki Final Agreement, illegal border crossings, mass migration, refugee affairs, Romanian-Hungarian tensions, state security services, system change in communist Europe, territorial demands, Warsaw Treaty Organization.

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At issue is the identification and analysis of the “refugee problem” in the context of Romanian-Hungarian relations of 1987-89. The task is daunting due to the complex web of events and communication flows – bilateral, multilateral and, in some respects, global – that had a direct or indirect bearing on the matter at hand. From 1987 on, the waves of refugees arriving from Romania tended to obscure other dimensions of conflict between the two states and the two ruling Communist parties. As it happened, not only ethnic Hungarians, but citizens of other countries, some from the Communist bloc, and some from the Third World, increasingly targeted Hungary as a destination country. The arrival of such migrants gave an advantage to the Hungarian leadership by endowing the regime with the image of being the positive alternative of a “reforming socialist” country to the West.

The following discussion seeks to examine the factors that motivated, and, in turn, influenced, the mass migration of Romanian citizens, (predominantly ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania) in the late 1980's. The case is summed up in unambiguous terms by a Hungarian governmental interagency position paper. “In the past few years, mainly due to the discriminating measures against citizens of Hungarian nationality, the lower living standards, the number of legal and illegal migrants, the majority of whom are ethnic Hungarians arriving in Hungary is increasing, and they have no intention of returning to the Socialist Republic of Romania”.²

Prior to the mid-1980s, it was Hungary which gave refugees to the world; but from 1987 on, the country became a destination for refugees from near and far. Between 1988 and 1995, more than 130,000 refugees were registered in the country. The number of those who arrived in Hungary receiving support from private persons, mainly relatives, without registering with the authorities, may be substantially higher. The main reason for this exodus was the Romanian regime's policies so-called regional and settlement reorganization - in Romanian official language – “systematization,” in colloquial Hungarian “village destruction,” that began in 1987. Furthermore, the Ceaușescu's dictatorship's violation of human rights also played a significant role, and was part and parcel of additional discriminatory measures against Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities. Social and economic problems were

2 The Inter-ministerial State Committee dealing with the affairs of foreign citizens residing in Hungary informs the county and town committee secretaries about their tasks connected to the solution of the situation of foreign, mainly Romanian citizens of Hungarian nationality residing in Hungary and not intending to return home. 14th April 1988. NAH HSWP CC PAD M-KS 288. f. 31/21. (hereafter: NAH: National Archives of Hungary HSWP: Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party; CC: Central Committee; PAD: Public Administrative Department)

also important migration factors. The immigration of Romanian citizens necessitated enhanced measures of border control, and related administrative procedures. Much of this posed new challenges to Hungarian agencies of state security and public safety. The issue also called for an intensification of negotiations between and among the “fraternal socialist parties” of the Soviet bloc. The object of the exercise was the moving of this unprecedented phenomenon toward established and hitherto workable socialist interstate diplomatic and political consultative channels. With the principal focus on the complex problem of migration, and the utilization of contemporary documentary evidence, the following discussion seeks to address three related issues. These are the instruments of the Romanian policy, particularly the use of state’s internal security organs for the implementation of the regime’s policies of “systematization”, the story and subsequent resolution of “incidents” along the Hungarian-Romanian border, and the differences in the two regimes’ management of the evolving refugee crisis of 1987-1989.

Political and Security Background

Large migrations are first and foremost examined by national security researchers as a challenge to security, one of the factors that may endanger public safety (Deák 2007: 17). The free movement of people between countries has been a natural phenomenon since the fall of the “iron curtain,” and migration affects security. Mass migration may also burden the social and economic capacity and infrastructure of a given country. In addition, it may foster the underground economy, money laundering and organised crime, or it may open channels to radicalism, extremism and political violence. However, beyond these security considerations, it is also worth examining the political and economic dimensions of migration.

In Hungary, just as in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, after 1947-48 the issue of legal and illegal migration was fundamentally considered a state security concern. In an era attentive to class struggle, the ideological argument was quite simple: those inclined to leave the people’s democracy could be only (political) criminals, but most people arriving were considered likely spies.³ It was also characteristic that the Hungarian Bureau of Immigrant and Emigrants’ Protection,⁴ originally created in 1921, continued dealing with the affairs of immi-

3 Our democratic police is five years old. Hungarian Policeman. 15th January 1950, p. 4.

4 44.700/1921. Directive of the Ministry of the Interior.

grants after 1945. However the Bureau ceased operations on June 15 1948⁵, although formally minor issues were dealt with by the World Association of Hungarians.⁶ It is not accidental, that based on the resolution number 4353/1949/268./M.T. of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Hungary, the Border Police were transferred from the Ministry of Defense to the jurisdiction of the State Security Agency – the notorious political police, better known by its Hungarian acronym, the ÁVH.⁷ Furthermore, the command structure of the Border Guards was merged, as one department, under the aegis of the AVH.⁸ In this period, a system of total border control was established along the southern (Yugoslav) and western (Austrian) border areas.⁹ With reference to restrictions on travel abroad, no data was found on any permits issued to emigrate from Hungary between 1949 and 1953.¹⁰ According to official political doctrine in a people's democracy there were no legitimate reasons for emigration (See Szántó 1984); therefore, emigration was not, and could not have been, a concern. As for foreign individuals coming to Hungary, state security had to be particularly vigilant against those few who were deemed to be “war-mongering, counter-revolution-plotting imperialists”. Those who tried to cross the border illegally, “defying the scrutiny of border security” (Kádár 1953: 87), were in serious danger. Following the patterns of the Soviet penal code, nearly to the letter, other Eastern-European countries also regulated border-related transgressions.¹¹

5 463.231/1948. Directive of the Ministry of the Interior.

6 Jenes. M.: The Bureau Defending Hungarian Emigrants and Re-migrants. 1945-1948. NAH XIX-B-7.

7 255.100/Presidential Department (hereafter: Pres.) Directive of the Leader of State Security Agency (hereafter: SSA) in 30th December 1949. Central Archives of the Ministry of the Interior (hereafter: CAMI). Collection of Directives (hereafter CD) 1949. box 12 (hereafter b.)

8 Boreczky, Beatrix: The organisation of the SSA, 1950-1953. Safe. 1. Historical Office, Bp., 1999, p. 99.

9 In 1950, then in 1952, along the western borderlines a 15 km-long borderline area, and within it, 500 and 50 m-wide borderlines were established where one could enter only with the permission of the police or the border guard service. Only border guards could enter 50-m borderlines. Along the western borderlines, a square system of barbed wire was established. In the South and in the West, a 318 km-long minefield was built. The minefield was removed along the southern borderlines in 1956, but it was resettled in the West in 1957. The minefields were ceased in 1965 in the southern, and in 1969 in the western borderline area. The removal of the minefields was finished in 1971 (See also: Csapodi 2002 and Okvát 1988).

10 In 1953, 153 persons were permitted to emigrate. (Tóth 2001: 35)

11 See Penal Code: Official Text. Edited by the Panel of the Ministry of Justice and Public Prosecutor's Office of the Socialist Republic of Romania. Scholarly Publishing House, Bucharest, 1956. section 320-322.

Keeping with the demands of in-depth prevention, the operational field of the border guard service was a 15-km-wide swath from the border. Within that area, the border guards always to be in service to detect illegal border crossings, with instructions to arrest illegal border crossers and hand them over to the police.¹² The operational tasks were performed by reconnaissance units. Their assignment was to detect individuals who may endanger border security. This was to be done by covert and open means such as social interaction and cooperation with the civilian population. Usually, border control regulations were carried out without taking into account the particular political character of the neighbouring countries. The border control network, however, distinguished between the “Western relationship” and the “southern and fraternal border relationship.” In the latter case, the border guard agency dealt mainly with illegal border crossers coming in and related to tourism, and those who wanted to leave the country illegally. The agency also performed cross-border assignments and exploratory missions – mainly in the western areas. For more effective cooperation the border guard units and the regional state security operatives prepared an annual joint plan of action.¹³

The establishment of the system of total border control (and the penal regulations for it) certainly did not completely prevent, though significantly hindered those who wanted to cross the borders illegally. For political reasons, after 1949 many Greek, and after 1973, many Chilean sought refuge in Hungary. However, apart from these western leftist self-exiles, it has been Hungary that gave refugees to the world for more than fifty years. As for legal and illegal migration, there are no exact data after 1945.¹⁴ Based on various sources, we can estimate that approximately 100,000 people migrated from Hungary in the period between 1945 and 1956, (mainly between 1944 and 1945) but the number of people legally emigrating did not reach 15,000. After the wave of migration of about 170,000 in 1956-57, the number of legal emigrants was about 1500-2400, while the number of illegal migrants fluctuated between 300 and 500 before the 1960s.¹⁵ From the 1960's to the 1980's

12 Border Control Regulations. Ministry of the Interior. Order number 7. 20th February 1958. CAMI CD 1958.

13 The assignments of the exploratory bodies of the Border Guards of the Ministry of the Interior. Order number 014. CAMI CD 1969. no. 10-21/14/69.

14 It is only a partial explanation that the documents of the SSA from between 1951-1953 do not reach two metres documents in the Historical Archives of the State Security Agency (See: Baráth 2008: 131)..

15 People who committed the crime of „escaping abroad” were not accused of a crime against the state, but for a political crime, based on the Penal Code passed in 1961. These people did not commit crimes included in chapter 9 of the Penal Code, but committed

more people left the country than those who migrated to Hungary, 1000 to 2000 people immigrated (Harcza 1997: 221). Illegal migration was very low until the 1980's. Between 1960 and 1987, the number of illegal border crossings did not reach 500 in any year,¹⁶ but the number of illegal border crossers coming from Romania did not reach 10,000 persons per year until 1987.¹⁷

Since the mid-1980s, the situation changed. While the number of emigrants quickly decreased, the number of foreign citizens entering Hungary legally or illegally (mainly from Romania, but not exclusively ethnic Hungarians) and intending to settle down increased quickly. The years of 1987-88 witnessed a sharp reversal of migration patterns since the end of World War II. In 1987, compared to the number of immigrants, the numbers of legal (1,476) and illegal (4,923) emigrants showed a population decrease of 4,000. In 1988, however, the population showed a net increase of 8,000 people (12,788 immigrants vs. 4,864 emigrants). From this period, the difference in migration did not show negative ratios in any period. (Tóth 1997: 65) It is a noteworthy circumstance that the number of illegal border crossings in the "eastern border" area already approached 7,000 (6,854), and, except one, all the border violators were detained.¹⁸

Special attention gained by the migration phenomenon popularly known as "Romanian refugees" could be explained by the complexity of the issue. Disputes between two communist states belonging to the same alliance system became increasingly tense and became acrimonious when the two leaderships' policy postures escalated beyond previously shared positions regarding ideology, inter-party and international relations.

In the 1980 and, in some respects well before that, the two regimes had been at loggerheads about many policy issues. These hitherto semi-latent conflicts came to the surface when each regime sought to legiti-

a crime against the public order and safety included in chapter 12. See: The number of crimes committed against the state and of political nature, the reasons for the crimes based on the experienced of the past 14 years. Ministry of the Interior Department III/1. 3rd March 1974. 16 p. in CAMI CD no. 1974. 34-67/74.

16 Report about the results of border control. The Proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the long-run assignments of border control. 3rd February 1989. Supplement number 3. MOL M-KS 288. f. 5/1054.

17 The number of Romanians migrating to Hungary in a yearly compilation. István Horváth: The migration of the Hungarian minority in Romania to Hungary. Korunk. February 2002. Chart number 8.

18 Report about the results of border control. The Proposal of the Minister of the Interior to the Political Committee of the HSWP about the long-run assignments of border control. 3rd February 1989. Supplement number 3.

mate its rule by resorting to sharply different policy. Kadar opted for soft dictatorship and consumerism, Ceausescu chose national chauvinism, de facto ethnic cleansing of Hungarian-populated Transylvania and an economy of scarcities. These incompatible postures were rapidly exacerbated by the ethnic Hungarians' attempted exodus from Romania. The bilateral dispute soon acquired international dimensions. With the help of the regime-controlled media, each side sought to justify its domestic agenda – both to their domestic constituencies and to the international community. Both sides sought to elicit international support for their cause. In this situation, a variety of data, motives and interpretations of their decisions, were published with reference to the groups of people migrating from Romania to Hungary.

The fundamental equation is straightforward: “people always tend to escape from tyranny to freedom.” As an expert observer explained, the common thread of the reason for migration is coercion or pressure to leave. These include “political persecution, ethnic or racial discrimination, disasters, wars and military conflicts, and finally unemployment, or social and economic problems” (Tóth 1991: 112). As for Romania, it would be misleading to treat political motives as the sole reason for that regime's conduct. It is true that refugees escaping from Romania mainly complained of “lack of democracy, terror, ever-present spy network, and ethnic discrimination by way of coercive “urbanisation” and the dismantling of small rural communities (Kende 1989: 95-96). However, contrary to the official propaganda, it was a fact of life in Romania, that the majority of the population, compared to the European average, as well as to the Hungarian standards of living, lived in poor and ever-worsening conditions.¹⁹ As shown below, our discussion will focus mainly on the political motives of the refugees, because these played a decisive role in motivating the migration of Romanian citizens, but also in the measures taken by Hungary and her domestic agencies, as well as in the receptivity of the refugees by Hungarian public opinion.

Next to questions related to the legitimacy of the Kadar regime, the nationality question, that is, the issue of the ethnic Hungarians across Hungary's borders, was a forbidden topic. The issue was made taboo by the web of the regime's commitments to the internationalist and “fraternal” socialist (communist) parties of the Soviet bloc. From this it follows that the interpretation of problems presented by the presence

19 We may as well call the case of a twenty-year-old couple tragic-comical. They left their six-months-old baby in Romania and justified their escape with the fact that “there is video in Hungary”. Forró, Tamás and Havas, Henrik's interview with captain Péntes, Margit the acting director of the Division of Administration of Hajdú-Bihar county police department. After Arad – who knows where?, Háltér, Budapest., 1988, p. 78.

of the Hungarian minority was the regime's prerogative. Therefore, an open discussion of these issues was relegated to the politically illegal opposition. It also gave voice and an agenda to Hungarian émigrés of the west, as well as to the Hungarian-language media published and broadcast abroad.

The meetings of editors-in-chief of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) served as additional control mechanism of the party over the press (Hegedűs 2001; Pór 2004). Such monthly meetings sought to identify anticipated events suitable for publication, as well as an analysis of the media's output to date. Pursuant to the regime's agenda on the "nationality question," the party leadership suspended in 1978 all "problematic writings" related to Transylvania, as well as strengthened the "effectively functioning" of "ex-post censorship". It "provisionally" mandated that writings dealing with Hungarians abroad could only be published after consulting with the Central Committee's Department of Agitation and Propaganda. However, more important than these measures were the interpretation of the set of guiding principles for the press:²⁰

- Regardless of location in the world, only socialism can solve the problem of nationalities; there is no other solution.
- The fundamental precondition to resolve the nationality question is that there should be good relations between peoples and countries. Read: tensions between Hungarians and Romanians only harm the situation of Hungarians living in Romania.
- We must treat the issue in a way that would not harm our cause (danger of isolation) and would not harm Hungarians living outside the borders.
- The ethnic issue is not a territorial issue for us.
- Hostile, fascist émigré groups now especially agitating on behalf of Hungarians in Romania are our enemies, as they are enemies of the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Hungarians living in Romania.
- In sum, we care about the fate of Hungarians abroad according to principles of internationalism.

In the same year the same issue came up, with a similar level of secrecy, but with a radically different interpretation. At that time, the Department of Intelligence (III/I-1.) of the Ministry of the Interior was tasked with intelligence operations against the United States and international organizations. Evidence of the success in obtaining information needed for domestic consumption in Hungary was the

20 NAH M-KS 288. f. 22178/25.

acquisition of a NATO internal document. On 18th April 1978, the British delegation prepared a memorandum about the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania for the session of the Political Committee of the NATO.²¹ Slightly two months later, the Minister of the Interior sent the translation of the memorandum to János Kádár and to the five members of the party's Politburo. The summary is as follows:

- The Hungarian ethnic minority – that lives mainly in Transylvania – is one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe. According to Romanian census data, there are 1,7 million Hungarians of the total population of 21,5 million. According to Hungarian émigré sources, the number of Hungarians living in Romania is estimated at 2,5 or possibly 3 million.
- Transylvania has historical importance for both Romania and Hungary. For the Romanians, it means the homeland of their ancestors who lived there since antiquity. Hungarians had ruled Erdély directly or indirectly since the 13th century. From 1867 to the First World War, the Romanians suffered much from Hungarian nationalism and forcible attempts to assimilate. The Romanians – considering the invasion of northern Transylvania by Hungarians in the Second World War by virtue of the Second Vienna Award of August 1940 - are probably afraid that the Hungarians once again will demand the return of Transylvania.
- At the end of the 1950's, the old Hungarian university in Cluj Napoca was integrated into the Romanian university system as part of coercion against the Hungarian ethnic minority; and this coercion has been implemented partly or totally ever since. Probably encouraged by other anti-regime movements elsewhere in Eastern Europe, some members of the Hungarian minority initiated an open protest movement in recent years. The first manifestation of this protest – to which the west paid attention – was the so-called "Lazarus Document" allegedly written by a Hungarian person living in Transylvania under a pseudonym.²² This document contains a report about the past of the Hungarians in Transylvania, about

21 The situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania: further vicissitudes. (A magyar kisebbség helyzete Romániában: újabb megpróbáltatások.) Report of Benkei, András about the NATO-report, 1st July 1978. CAMI Files of Interior 1978/ 96. 1-a-776.

22 In the March-April issue of the Paris Literary Journal the study entitled Report about Transylvania (Jelentés Erdélyről) is published, written by Tóth, Sándor professor of Philosophy in Cluj Napoca and Budapest philosopher Tordai, Zádor under the pseudonym Lázár, György. The Western media turns attention to the report. For example, the issue of the Le Monde published on 5th May 1978 explains it, and then the report of Schöpflin, György is written based on this report, published by Minority Rights Group. The Witnesses to Cultural Genocide was published in 1979 in the volume entitled Romania's Minority Policies Today that was published in New York in the edition of the American

their participation in the fight for Romanian socialism between the two world wars and describes their present situation. Although it is very probable that the document was written before 1976, it was published in the West only in March 1977. An intellectual group consisting of mainly Transylvanian Hungarians somehow managed to obtain this document; therefore, it also became known in Hungary before the meeting of Kádár and Ceaușescu in June 1977 near the Romanian-Hungarian border [...]²³

- The Hungarians are critical the “Romanization” policies in education, because they are afraid that this phenomenon will not only decrease the number of educated Hungarian in positions requiring a high level of academic preparation to a minimal number, but it also endangers the characteristic Hungarian culture in Transylvania. The ethnic policy of President Ceaușescu is the product of Romanian nationalism that is the gist of both his external policy and internal policy aiming to create a strong nation state. Ceaușescu, in his speech addressed to the Commission of Hungarian-speaking Workers on 15th March said that ethnic problems must be examined based on class aspects, and “if discriminations occurred in Romania, then they did not occur based on national, but on class interests”.
- Kádár also spoke about the solution of ethnic problems with socialist solutions. In an interview published in the Frankfurter Rundschau the previous year Kádár declared: “In the 20th century, an ethnic problem cannot be solved by 19th century standards. The fate of the minority cannot be separated from the fate of the majority. The ethnic issue is one of the issues that will gain their final solution in socialism, based on the fact that socialism provides free development for the whole society, including the minorities within. In today’s Europe, the fate of nations and ethnic minorities cannot be solved by recalling past glories, only by the correct application of the lessons of history.” This last sentence can be interpreted as a warning to Hungarians living in Hungary, or as criticism to the Romanians, or both. Kádár, while he is probably anxious about the fate of the Hungarians in Transylvania, has to operate carefully, if

Transylvanian Federation Inc. and the Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, with the foreword of Schöpflin, György. (See also: Tóth 1989: 5-16.)

23 The document was later forwarded – with current information – to Király, Károly, the former member of the CC of RCP and the Romanian Parliament. It deals with the letters of the Vice President of The Committee of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality written to leading Romanian personalities, in which Király, Károly expresses his deep anxiety about the violent assimilation attempts of the Romanian Government against Hungarians. Király was obliged to move from Tirgu Mures, a town populated by Hungarian majority to Caransebes where he was assigned to be the director of a furniture factory. See the whole text: Révész, Béla: A NATO-document about the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania (NATO dokumentum a romániai magyar kisebbség helyzetéről). ArchívNet 2005. http://www.archivnet.hu/old/rovat/cikk.phpml?cikk_kod=109

he does not want to see the revival of nationalism and irredentism in Hungary.

- Kádár – according to the declaration – during his meeting with Ceaușescu last year agreed that for both countries the right solution of minority issues lies in building socialism; at the same time, he admitted that the solution of the problem are an internal affair of each country. During the meeting an agreement was reached on opening the border for local traffic and about the establishment of a Consulate in Cluj Napoca a long time wish of local Hungarians and about the establishment of a Romanian Consulate in the Hungarian city of Debrecen. Despite this, concerns in Hungary about the fate of Hungarians living in Transylvania did not subside. Gyula Illyés, the well-known Hungarian writer published articles in the December and January issues of the Hungarian daily Magyar Nemzet expressing concern for the increasing oppression of the Hungarian minority in Romania. When Stefan Andrei, secretary of foreign affairs of the Party visited Hungary, the issue was obviously discussed, but judging from the brief statements issued and published on the press of both countries, no visible progress was made on the matter.
- While it is not probable that Kádár would encourage the re-emergence of Hungarian territorial demands for Transylvania, the Romanian failure to improve their treatment of the Hungarian minority will most likely not satisfy Budapest's expectations, leading to continued or even increased tensions between the two countries. The assumption is that it is not in the interest of the Soviet Union for the situation to worsen but it may be tempted to apply some degree of pressure on Romania in response to the Hungarian minority concerns.

The NATO report reflects the British Intelligence's concise summary of the background of the historic ethnic conflict between Hungary and Romania, focusing on the current problems, that is, those of the 1970's forwarding the information to the NATO Council, one of the most significant deliberative bodies of the organization. A very important approach of the report is that it made a connection between the increasing protests on behalf of the Hungarian minority and the opposition movements in Eastern Europe. Using material from legal and undercover sources of intelligence, the report was able to document the tensions between the two countries, it also offered dubious solutions to end the controversy, using official documents and unofficial or informal hearsay material. A common feature of the above mentioned documents is the article written by noted Hungarian writer Gyula Illyés published in the Christmas 1977 issue of Magyar Nemzet. In fact, while the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party calls it a "problematic writing",

the NATO report makes reference to the “very strong article” by the “highly respected Hungarian writer”. There are no data about the fate of the NATO report. János Kádár read the document without commenting on it. In the next decade, its most significant findings became increasingly valid.

Urbanization, Village Destruction: Motives, Opportunity, Pretext

After the publication of the three-volume *History of Transylvania*²⁴ in 1986, edited by a leading party ideologue, the already tense Hungarian-Romanian relationship was further burdened by ideological conflicts. The Romanian government did its best to make people and the international public opinion believe that the history book contained “Fascist, chauvinistic and racist statements” and “forgeries of history that harm the memory of the victims of the Horthyist terror”.²⁵ In their campaign, “the nationwide plenary sessions of the Committee of Hungarian-speaking Workers” was also enrolled in the effort. On 27th February 1987, a new session Commission of Ethnic Affairs was organised and even non-experts criticized the *History of Transylvania* without reading it and made their statements on prepared texts. Ceaușescu argued for the theory of Daco-Romanian continuity, spoke about the Hungarian-Romanian cooperation against the Turks and declared that the ethnic issues had already been solved in Romania. He commented on the book that “it was a forgery of history” that was thwarting cooperation between two socialist countries.²⁶

24 Erdélyi története I-III (*History of Transylvania I-III*). [edited by Köpeczi, Béla]. Akadémiai, Budapest, 1986.

25 On 7th April 1987, the *Times* published an advertisement that with the publication of the book, “under the aegis of the Hungarian academy of Sciences, history has been forged”. Under the same title, another text were published in English written by academicians St. Pascu, M. Musat and Fl. Constantinu (A Conscientious Forgery of History of Transylvania under the Aegis of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Romanian News Agency.), enumerating the opinions of Romanian historians about the Dacian-Romanian Continuity, the independent Province of Transylvania, the national effort of Duke Michael, the rightfulness of the Romanian revolution in 1848-49, the Hungarian oppression in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, citing Marx, Lenin, Tolstoy and Björnson. The Trianon Treaty of Peace was evaluated as the resolution of the Romanian population of Transylvania, in North Transylvania, the oppression of the Hungarians between 1940 and 1944 and the deportation of Jews were emphasised, and finally it was declared that ethnic issues were already solved in Romania. The edition was considered “revisionist, chauvinistic, reminiscent of the Hungarian history writings of the Horthy-era”. (See: Köpeczi 2006: 1)

26 Ibid.

But the anger fuelled by the Romanian political leadership was only an element of increasingly vocal national homogenisation efforts. At the 10th Congress of the Romanian Communist party, the Secretary General highlighted the changing role of the state: “No doubt that after the elimination of the exploiting classes, in harmony the developing homogenization of the socialist society, the role of the state and the instruments it employs also changes.”²⁷ When making reference to the nationalities of Romania and until the mid-eighties, Ceaușescu made specific references to “all of the workers – Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and other nationalities”, but this expression was replaced by “all of the workers without any differences, our whole people”, “all citizens of our homeland” and “nationalities living together” at the session of the Committees of Hungarian and German Workers at the end of 1984.²⁸

However, the process of cultural homogenisation had begun much earlier (Süle, 1990: 265-269; Lipcsey 1989: 64-66; Tóth 1989: 124-133). In the first quarter of 1985, broadcasting by the ethnic district stations of the Romanian Radio were discontinued in Cluj Napoca, Targu Mures and Timisoara and the editorial staff and their nearly 600 employees were dismissed. The Hungarian language TV channels had a similar fate. From 1986, the material of the museums in Transylvania was transferred to Bucharest²⁹, and Hungarian books became unavailable for the readers in the libraries.³⁰ Bilingual inscriptions and street names disappeared in Transylvania, and the majority of streets of Hungarian

27 N. Ceaușescu: The Report of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party about the activities of RCP from the period between Congress 9 and 10 about the future tasks of the Party. 6th August 1969. In: Romania on the way of building a many-sided developed socialistic society. Politics, Bucharest, 197, p. 297

28 See: A Magyar Nemzetiségű Dolgozók Tanácsának feladatairól a XIII. pártkongresszus i határozatok fényében (In the light of the Resolutions of the Party Congress 13 about the tasks of the Committee of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality. Onwards (Előre), 29th December 1989.

29 “Connected to the preparation of the party meeting, the first room of the Museum of Local History in Cernat where the most ancient monuments of local history were exhibited was evacuated and was filled with the material presenting the periods of the Dacians to present day and the Ceausescu-era, based on the guidelines of the County Museum. However, on the county level it was considered so important that the Secretariat of Propaganda Affairs ordered the leader of the Securitate to check it in person on Saturday, 7th November.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 10 November 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. b.

30 “The distribution of all Hungarian press products was suspended throughout Romania for 1990. The chances of press subscriptions were very narrow even this year, but until 1989 it was allowed to subscribe for Hungarian press products not containing political and cultural references. The customs procedure well-known as for Hungarian press

towns were renamed in Romanian. The number of books published in Hungarian decreased to 50 percent in 10 years; in 1972 265 books were published in Hungarian, but only 225 in 1980, and in 1987 less than 200. Only 2 million books of the 50 million copies published in 1981 were Hungarian, but based on the ethnic-linguistic ratios, this number should have been around 4 million. After the Second World War, there were six independent Hungarian theatres in Romania – more in 1956, when four companies operated only in Cluj Napoca – up to the 1980's, when only two theatres remained: one in Cluj and one in Timisoara.

The two large theatres of Transylvania were integrated into Romanian theatre companies: in Targu Mures and Sfântu Gheorghe. From the end of the 1970s, the number of Hungarian primary and secondary schools decreased to 25 percent. Based on the earlier Act of Education, 15 students were sufficient to create an “ethnic class,” but until the beginning of the 1980s the students could learn in Hungarian primary school with 25 students and in secondary schools with 36 students. While in the school year 1977-78 the number of Hungarian primary school students was 7-8 percent, in 1986-87 this ratio was only 5 percent.

The practice introduced in 1956 according to which one could take an entrance exam in Hungarian at any university of the country, and in case of students a Hungarian group, could be established, was ended. In the Department of Hungarian Studies of Babes-Bolyai University 32 instructors taught in the school year 1964-65, but only 14 in 1988. In the school year 1986-87 7 students got a degree of Hungarian studies, but since it was the state that gave jobs to graduating teachers, engineers and doctors, fewer and fewer of them got a job in the areas of Transyl-

products makes it impossible that even a letter written in Hungarian should be allowed in Romania.” Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 7th December 1988.

In the recent weeks, Chlef Bogdán, teacher of Romanian and French language was nominated as the director of the “closed library” of Sfântu Gheorghe, 54 years old (his wife is Hungarian) who is renowned for his hatred for Hungarians. The town propaganda secretary is Chlef's best friend. The new library director was assigned to annihilate everything in the library and in the Székely Museum that is Hungarian as soon as possible. The ambition of the director leaves no doubt about that he will accomplish his mission as soon as he can. The “cleaning” will begin in a few weeks.

Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 7th February 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. b. “Our cultural reporter has made an interview with A. Pezderka who takes over the library in Romania. Pezderka told: The Romanian party does not intend to give back the books of 500,000 ROL value, as defined in the earlier agreement. Strictly for our own information, he handed us a list composed by him about our orders. From the list it turns out that only a small quantity of the books ordered by them has been transported up to now, one part of them is still being printed, another was not even sent to the printery. According to Pezderka, the Romanian intention is clear: since he cannot satisfy our demands, based on the principle of reciprocity, he will decrease his orders from Hungary. Report of the Hungarian Embassy, Bucharest, 1st December 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 77. b.

vania populated by Hungarian majority. In 1985, 5 of the 22 final-year students got a job in Transylvania, and since 1987, it was the norm that Hungarians having a baccalaureate or a similar degree were employed in nearly exclusively Romanian-speaking areas.³¹

The “Urbanization Project”

The situation worsened with news gradually coming out of Romania at the beginning of 1988 about the urbanization project of gigantic proportions, later called “village destruction” scheme. Romania declared in March that the majority of the population of villages would be relocated to so-called “agricultural centers of urban character” within the framework of the urbanization project. According to his own admission, President Nicolae Ceaușescu was preparing for the project to run for more than 20 years.³² The details of the President and Secretary General of the Party were made known to the world in his speech delivered on 29th April 1988. The number of villages (then about 14,000) were to be cut by nearly half - declared Ceaușescu at the session of the Political Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist party. The Central Committee quickly accepted his declaration at its next session, and in May the 40 county party committees also announced support for the project. In place of the about 7,000 villages to be eliminated, they proposed to create 350,000 hectares of field and nearly 500 large industrial and agro-biological complexes. This project affected 2,000 largely Hungarian settlements, mainly in counties Harghita, Alba, Bihar, Cluj, Satu Mare and Covasna (See: Vincze 1994).

The initial shock was followed by sharp Hungarian, and then, international protests. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations spoke up against the project. At the end of February the United States declared that they would deny Romania most favored nation status because of its human rights record. The most favored nation status trade privilege had been given to Romania for its previous independent foreign policy posture within the Soviet bloc. The Government of the

31 See: Cabinet Directive 54/1975 about the position of graduates in the industrial production.

32 The CC of RCP passed the principles of the improvement of the administrative-territorial reorganisation of the country and of the urbanisation of villages in October 1967. But exactly what it means was conceptualised by Ceaușescu in his comment held at the Congress of People's Committee Presidents in 1976: “As for the urbanisation of villages we do our best to decrease the number of such settlements (...) and establish strong centres, the most important social and economic activities are focused on mainly in developable communities and villages. 1989, p. 78.

Federal Republic of Germany learned about the village destruction plan with "the greatest anxiety", as it would affect the German minority living in Romania. At the Vienna follow-up meeting (1986-1989) dealing with the Helsinki Final Agreement it was reiterated in several speeches that the provision of ethnic rights was an organic part of normal interstate relationships, and the meeting in Vienna could not ignore the event connected to it.

The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Romania in the beginning of April and explained: the Hungarian government had been informed with deep anxiety about the fact that in Romania the names of settlements had been used only in Romanian from 3rd April. Furthermore, they told him that the elimination of smaller settlements would modify the ethnic composition of the country and this measure would discriminate against ethnic minorities. The forcible eviction of residents would violate the most basic human rights; with the elimination of thousands of the villages inhabited by ethnic minorities their sense of community and preservation of heritage would be weakened.³³ In this situation, Károly Grósz made an unexpected announcement in the middle of July at the national meeting of Worker Guard commanders, when he declared that he would soon start official negotiations in the Socialist Republic of Romania.³⁴ His proposal was accepted by the session of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party Secretary on 28th March 1988, and the official invitation transmitted by Bucharest with the proviso that "the date of the visit should be diplomatically agreed".³⁵ According to the decision of the Political Committee made at the session on 14th June, the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs of the two parties should have a preparatory initial meeting where they would discuss the elements of the Hungarian-Romanian relationship. If these initial negotiations were successful, there would be a basis for the later negotiations with the Heads of the Governments and later a meeting of at Secretary General level.³⁶

The demonstration held at the Heroes's Square in Budapest on 27th June rewrote the planned scenario for both Budapest and Bucharest. At the mass demonstration organised for the first time since 1956 about 40 to 50 thousand people (according to the police 20 to 30 thousand, and

33 The events were published only three months later. The spokesman of Foreign Affairs Komoróczy, István about the Romanian measures. *Népszabadság* 7 June 1988.

34 Nationwide Congress of Worker Guard Commanders (Munkásőr-parancsnokok országos találkozója). *Népszabadság*, 13 June 1988.

35 NAH M-KS 288. f. 7/802.

36 NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1028.

according to the participants more than 150 thousand) demonstrated against the plan of village destruction program.³⁷ Next day the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called in the Hungarian ambassador in Bucharest and informed him that the Romanian Government decided to close immediately the Hungarian Consulate in Cluj Napoca and demanded that the staff of the Consulate should leave Romania within 48 hours. The decision was justified by the Hungarian demonstrations against the Romanian resettlement plan.³⁸

On the same day, the Council of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality held session. The approved statement hailed as the greatest achievement of the Ceaușescu-era that is “securing consistently the total equality of all compatriots and the unity of the workers.” They resented and declared unacceptable the chauvinistic, irredentist, and revanchist manifestations of the People’s Republic of Hungary that “purposefully distort reality and treat with hostility the great achievements of the Romanian people through the new socialist social system that not only falsify the present, but also the historical past.” Next day the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party took up the question of the Romanian- Hungarian relations in a similar vein.³⁹ Ceaușescu declared that “certain chauvinist and nationalistic circles, in order to distract attention from problems wanting for solutions, employ methods that even Horthy would not have allowed”.⁴⁰

The tense situation and its background were summarised by a comprehensive report prepared in Bucharest that was forwarded to the Minister of Foreign Affairs by the Ambassador:⁴¹

Based on Nicolae Ceaușescu’s own conception, in the autumn of 1986 we obtained the first information about a comprehensive plan of

37 Heroes' Square (Hősök tere). 'June 88 27. editor: Varga, Csaba. Eötvös, Budapest., 1998.; Ara-Kovács, Attila: Mirage on the street corner (Délibáb az utcasarkon). Speaker (Beszélő), 1999, p. 9.

38 On 28th June the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania called in Szűcs, Pál, Hungarian ambassador in Budapest and informed him about the Romanian party and state leadership according to which the operation of the Consulate in Cluj Napoca is considered to be ceased, and the crew of the Consulate should leave Romanian within 48 hours. Népszabadság 29th July 1989.

39 The letter of the CC to the HSWP. Népszabadság, 30 June 1988.

40 See: Forced orientations – minority policies (Történeti kényszerpályák - kisebbségi realpolitikák).

41 A falurombolási terv jelenlegi állása (The present situation of the village destruction project). Pál Szűcs ambassador's proposal forwarded to Minister of Foreign Affairs Várkonyi, Péter. Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 12 December 1988. 198/Szt/1988. HSWP Department of Social Policy NAH M-KS 288. f. 22/1989. 22.

resettlement according to which a demarcation of area where settlements can be built will be outlined, and the real estate and settlements outside that demarcation will be eliminated. According to the plans of that period, the affected real estate will be nationalized. The former owners will be compensated at 20% of the value of their property. These owners would be housed in rental units in the village center or elsewhere in the new settlement, generally with smaller plots of land (250 square meters). Vice Prime Minister Ion Dinca explained at the meeting with Comrade Váncsa⁴² that with this new method, for example, with the elimination of superfluous roads they would gain back 500,000 hectares of land for agriculture. Another objective was to eliminate the differences between villages and towns.

From these conceptions evolved the program of village destruction and the bulldozer policy. The execution of the program would be just one component and symbol of the historically grandiose Ceaușescu-era. In our view, the redrawing of the ethnic and geographical map of the country, is not directly linked to the broad range settlement program worked out in the 1970's in Romania. At that time there were no plans to eliminate half of the settlements. Thais why it is untenable that Ceaușescu's claim that the project undertaken would be a part of a 20 year plan.

It is true that earlier resettlement plans were frequently discarded. The modification and destruction carried out in Bucharest were often done by on-site decision made by Ceaușescu himself (not only due to the building program of the new monumental government quarter) and as part of the creation of several town centres in the country. In underdeveloped regions, for example in Moldova, the new centres meant a positive change, a kind of improvement; but in other cases, for example, in Transylvania, they contributed to the uprooting of historic and ethnic characteristics. The secretary general of the Romanian Communist party admitted that "settlements in Transylvania are more compact."

The plan of village destruction involving many settlements, real estate and masses of people was unique in the world, and had from the very beginning a negative bent in terms of ethnic policy, as the settlement program was designed to strengthen the Romanian character of ethnic areas and weaken the centuries-old compactness of Hungarian ethnic groups. The redrawing of the map of Romania by Ceaușescu would have extremely negative consequences for the Hungarian ethnic minority, their values and for the preservation of Hungarian and

42 Váncsa, Jenő was the Minister of Agricultural Affairs between 1980 and 89, himself born in Brassow, Transylvania.

European history and culture. Because the ethnic characteristics of towns were changed in the past 70 years in favour of Romanians, the existence of the Hungarian ethnic communities remained more or less untouched in villages. The threatened disruption of this traditional network of villages posed the greatest danger. For example, the fate of churches and cemeteries was unclear; the majority of such properties were church property. We could assume that there may remain some historic buildings or monuments and others may be transferred by the church. As the churches, both Catholic and Protestant, lacked the necessary financial means, many monuments would have been lost, just as it happened in Bucharest. The ethnic character of Transylvania would diminish with the redrawing of the map, and the replacement of many villages would with uniform new settlements and towns.

Between 1986 and 1988, many villages were destroyed around Bucharest and modest small settlements were built where the whole population were forced to move in. Around Snagov, in the autumn of 1987 some villages were already destroyed. The former owners had to dismantle their own houses, or else they had to pay for the contractors to do it. In the new housing blocks they became not owners but tenants. This was not only a violation of human rights, but also illustrated the coercive character of the whole project.

It is noteworthy that the Romanian party leaders did not support the village destruction project until the beginning of 1987. The project was mentioned only in a few speeches given by Ceaușescu. The situation was the same in the time of the Congress of People's Councils in March, where Ceaușescu argued for speeding up the resettlement plan. He declared that the number of 13,000 villages must be drastically reduced to 5 to 6,000. Upon the implementation of the plan, at most 2,000 villages would have remained, and, in accordance with the number of agricultural committees, 558 agricultural centers were to be established. Until 1990, two-three model agricultural centers were to be created, and by 1995 the building of agricultural towns would be completed, and by 2000 the whole project must be completed.

After the congress, the resettlement of villages received a greater emphasis in the propaganda effort. The media got weekly instructions to promote the execution of the plan. The party's Central Committee and representatives of the National Council of People's Committees set up a committee in charge of carrying out the project, and the prime minister shortly thereafter became its leader.

A decision, which was not made public, was made about the fact that county plans would be worked out and finalized in a few months.

Although there were doubts about the feasibility of the program (at issue were financial resources and the capacity of the building industry), but the dismantling phase was fast approaching. There was some personal information from the ethnic areas of the county of Covasna, where the whole plan cycle would be completed by 1992.

In fact, based on the speeches given by Nicolae Ceaușescu all preparations were made for the village destruction program. The area around Bucharest was a showcase of the consequences of the program (See also: Hunya 1989).

When the report was made, “the top secret, highly confidential document made exclusively for the highest state and party leadership” could not be known for the Hungarian embassy, but the document was in possession of the Hungarian intelligence “from an operational venue”, and it also reached the narrow leadership of the HSWP via the ministry of the interior’s department III/I.⁴³ This department officially could not execute missions against “fraternal socialist countries” including Romania. On the other hand, its actual operational fields, marked with X, belonged to a “fraternal” socialist state. It was also an open secret that many agents of the Department of Foreign Intelligence of the Securitate, the Departamentul de Informații Externe (DIE), was already active in Hungary.⁴⁴

The documents evaluating the meeting of the two parties’ secretaries general on 28th August, 1998 in Arad, were drafted for the HSWP politburo by the foreign department of the CC, HSWP also called attention to this issue:

“Violating the agreements concerned, Romania is doing wide-range intelligence activities in Hungary. To neutralise these activities, the competent authorities of the ministry of interior should assess the impact of these activities against our state security, including the circles connected

43 Historical Archives of State Security Agency (hereafter: HASSA) (Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára) Secretary of Deputy Minister of State Security’s Files (Állambiztonsági Miniszterhelyettesi Titkárság iratai) 1.11.1. 27. b. 45-13/13/a/1988. Budapest, July 1988, pp. 174-183.

44 Dr. Horváth, István (former Minister of the Interior): There was some cooperation between the organisations regulated by bilateral agreements. The Hungarians had such agreements with the German Democratic Republic, Yugoslavia and Austria, and we were preparing to sign such an agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany. So there were certain agreements of cooperation between certain countries. There was cooperation and (...) there was also competition. And there was a manifestation, I must say, that we did not like, let us say that it is not important to write about in the daily press, but the Yugoslavian intelligence was operating in Hungary, in the same way as the Romanian intelligence. Memorandum about the session of the Committee Examining the Intelligence Activities of the Prime Minister, 6th July 2002, Delegation Hall of the Parliament. NBB-5/2002-2006.

with embassy staff and the activities of Romanian intelligence present in Hungary.⁴⁵

The document of the Hungarian intelligence forwarded to Budapest, cited below was not on the agenda of the politburo, but all the members of this body as well as the secretaries of the Central Committee.⁴⁶ The introduction of the report contains the summary of the ministry of the interior about the escalation of tensions up until 1988 and their reasons:

The competent authorities of the ministry of the interior – based on a high-level political decision – are continually informed about developments in the Romanian situation, Romanian moves and their outcome. According to this:

The Romanian authorities increased in July the discriminative actions taken against Hungarian missions and their staff in Romania. Selective control at airports was extended to our personnel, as well as to our experts on long-term missions and their family members, including their visiting relatives.

In a departure from earlier practice, an incident took place involving a Hungarian holding a diplomatic passport which was confiscated and a shipment consigned and sealed by the ministry of foreign trade, was opened and returned to him 8 hours later. There is suspicion that our diplomatic pouches are monitored electronically.

In conjunction with discriminative measures against Hungarian citizens assigned on official missions in Romania, the Romanian authorities were trying to give the impression that the Hungarian government was unable or unwilling to provide the appropriate circumstances for the unhindered operation of the Romanian embassy in Budapest. The advisor assigned to liaise with Romanian diplomats accredited in Budapest told diplomats of other countries that an expert of the Romanian ministry of foreign affairs visited Budapest at the beginning of this month (July) and his assignment was to make preparation for the evacuation of embassy staff and families.

It was rumoured that the successor of the incumbent Romanian ambassador in Budapest would not be career diplomat, but a well-known historian or academic, or perhaps only a caretaker official.

45 NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1035.

46 Sent to: Comrades Grósz, Károly; Dr. Berecz, János; Csehák, Judit; Hámori, Csaba; Iványi, Pál; Lukács, János; Németh, Miklós; Nyers, Rezső; Pozsgai, Imre; Szabó, István; Dr. Tatai, Ilona; Fejti, György; Varga, Péter; III/III-12., Archives.

There were signs that there was resistance against the resettlement plan. Apparently the leaders of Covasna and Harghita counties were trying to hinder the implementation of the programs by failing to prepare in a timely manner proposals for elimination of villages and were also trying to seek to obtain concessions from the central authorities.

Contemporary observers surmised that given the dissatisfaction with the resettlement program in some villages populated by both Hungarians and Romanians, the emphasis of Ceaușescu's speeches had shifted. In one of his speeches he said that the measures did not have to be acted upon so urgently, and in another there was a variation in the number of settlements to be destroyed.

There were prominent personalities and their family members among the Romanian citizens migrating to Hungary from Romania and not intending to return home. These included the children of high-ranking officers of the Securitate, the daughter of the former minister of the interior, an ex-body guard of Ceausescu.

On the Romanian side of the border everything was done to prevent the migration of people. A Securitate brigade of 2,800 was dispatched to the Romanian-Hungarian border. Their main task was to prevent illegal emigration of Romanian citizens to Hungary and to strengthen border control. To reinforce border guards, newly recruited Worker Guards were also deployed. On 15th July of 1987 shots were fired at a railway car behind the international express train to Biharkeresztes, and there are also unconfirmed reports of the presence of Securitate officers, with the mission to create confusion among refugees in Hungary.

We obtained the rough Hungarian translation of a top secret document issued by the Romanian Communist party for high-level political leaders. The material – assuming that was not disinformation – gives us an insight to the thinking of the highest Romanian leadership about the relationship of the two countries and about likely “solutions”.

Our agencies are monitoring events and adopting measures consistent with their sphere of authority.

The Bucharest-originated document provided no further information about purpose and character of the material itself or the circumstances surrounding its distribution, and there was not comment on part of Hungarian intelligence either. But the observation that the document “may have been sent to us as a provocation” suggest suspicion on the part of department III/I. In addition, the translation of the text was not done by the Hungarian state security agencies either, but “a rough and extracted translation” was obtained by Hungarian intel-

ligence. Much of this raises the question whether or not it was possible that a document drafted in Romanian “for the highest political leadership” could be translated into Hungarian at once in the Ceaușescu-era, or it is only a bogus disinformation document made for the Hungarian government.

However, the style and content of the document suggested that the document may be genuine and was intended for the Romanian party bureaucracy’s mid-level leadership. From documents of the HSWP, it was known that proposals were deemed to complete only when the issuers of the concerned departments were identified. In the document obtained, the issuers were the secretary, the CC and the secretariat of the Romanian Communist party. Therefore, it can be assumed that the document was confidential and was prepared by the department of agitation of propaganda of the CC with active contributions from the DIE (Romania’s security agency) and was intended to provide guidelines for the party apparatus (and perhaps leading press representatives) on how to handle the tense situation leading up to the summer of 1988. The stylistic feature of the document was that it contained “apparat-speak”, such as “our beloved Homeland, dear Romania”, “the great leader of the Romanian nation, of our homeland, Comrade Ceaușescu” may also support this assumption. Language of this sort was widely used in mass propaganda but rarely appeared in documents for the highest political leadership.

The document, however, contains some really remarkable information:

- All the conditions necessary to go forward with the resettlement project summarised in nine points were ready for the elimination of more than 7,000 villages. These conditions included the project timeline, the financial and technical requirements, including the involvement of Romanian National Army. However, in the light of subsequent events, the effect of vehement domestic and international protests could not have been an exaggeration, even though we do not have more precise information on this.
- The Romanian government imposed serious conditions to continue the Romanian-Hungarian talks with the probable aim that upon the likely refusal of those conditions the Hungarian side could be portrayed as uncompromising in resuming dialogue. Otherwise, the Romanian side would not have demanded next to the high-minded respect for Romanian national sovereignty, the absurd demand that the Hungarian Government should take the commitment to “end illiteracy”.

- During 1987, according to Romanian data, altogether 1,262 citizens migrated to Hungary, while Hungarian statistics list 10,445 people. The difference may be explained by the arrival illegal migrants and those who arrived in Hungary with a valid passport but refused to return to Romania. The Hungarian ministry of the interior declared on 10th June 1988 that from the beginning of the year 4,977 Romanian citizens had declared that they did not wish to return home. By the end of the year, 12,273 people were granted temporary residence by the Hungarian authorities.

The original text of this “the top secret, highly confidential document” is:

Recently, the humiliation of our beloved homeland, our dear Romania and the international discredit of the whole Romanian nation and the smears against our great leader of our homeland comrade Ceaușescu and the whole Romanian leadership has continued.

Certain countries interfere in the internal affairs of Romania and endanger the revolutionary socialist achievements and endanger our socialist state. Our beloved Romania has always strived that those who live in Romania should have the same rights and obligations. It must be accepted that people living in Romania are Romanian citizens regardless of their nationality.

The party and state leadership of the People's Republic in Hungary are pursuing a nationalistic policy. The political leaders want to create a distraction from the serious economic and social problems of the country. They do their best to discredit socialism building Romania before the international public with falsehoods. The Hungarian leadership also misinforms the Hungarian people about the real conditions in Romania, on the rights and the life ethnic minorities of our country and they portray a false account of our resettlement program.

Suffice it to say that the Hungarian People's Republic's economy is burdened with high debt, some 19 billion dollars that at this moment it is unable to repay. The country sustains itself by borrowing. The economic development of Hungary is far behind Romania's achievements.

Hungarian goods cannot be sold abroad, the Hungarian technology, chemical industry and other branches of industries are completely outdated. The exchange of goods has been the characteristic of the Romanian-Hungarian commerce for a long time. It is only due to the understanding of Romania and the patience of Comrade Ceaușescu that Romania is willing to buy low-quality products from Hungary.

Henceforth the economic relationships will have to be revised. Romania cannot endlessly sacrifice its economy to help a country that

permanently violates the rules of cooperation, a country that is encouraging Romanian citizens to leave their homeland, encouraging the Romanian workers to act against our beloved homeland and discredit Romanian socialist achievements abroad.

The chauvinist leaders of Hungary, instead of solving their own social problems, interfere in the affairs of neighbouring fraternal socialist country, under the leadership of the great builder of socialism, son of our beloved homeland and the people, Comrade Ceaușescu. The Hungarian leadership also denigrates the Romanian nation.

The Hungarian government calls the criminals escaping from the rightful fury and punishment of the Romanian people refugees. At the same time, the Hungarian Government keeps secret that thousands of Hungarians citizens search for asylum abroad and request political asylum in other countries, without intentions to return to Hungary.

Certainly, we cannot and do not want to solve the internal social crisis of the People's Republic of Hungary, but we expect the Hungarian government to solve these issues within their own country, and they should not be involved in the Romanian nation's revolutionary building of socialism. That is why we, at international forums, such as in Vienna, declare that all states should solve their own problems, and states should be banned from interfering in the internal affairs of other states.

Hungary makes territorial demands on our beloved homeland coupled with concern about the situation of our Romanian workers of Hungarian nationality. The chauvinist leaders of Hungary also keep it secret that there are ancient Romanian territories and what is more, also in the territory of Hungary, Romanian towns and townspeople.

If someone could have territorial demands, then it would be our dear homeland, Romania; but we do not speak about these rightful demands for the sake of friendship and the peace of neighboring peoples. But we are always ready to defend our socialist achievements against aggressors, with arms if we must. We are not afraid of threats, particularly not in the use of military force. The Hungarian attempts to conquer territory are condemned to failure. It does not only derive from the qualities of the Romanian National Army, but also from the high-level preparedness, commitment and patriotism.

We have the appropriate information about the fact that based on their equipment, the Hungarian Army can be called modern, but in its thinking it, morally, is still at the level of Horthy's army, and as for its human material, it is far behind our National Army. The Hungarian military leadership is bland; alcoholism has reached critical levels.

The only military force that can be called modern is the Hungarian air force, although the airplanes are getting older, and there is no money to replace them. At the same time, the homeland air force of our beloved homeland Romania has the equipment to defend our national air space.

The Romanian national army will undertake enormous tasks in the forthcoming resettlement program. On the one hand, in conformity with regional development regulations, our units will participate in the creation of newly designed functional districts; on the other hand, they will participate in the planned transfer of residents, assisting to convert the newly freed areas for agriculture.

The resettlement program begun on 1st June (of 1988) must be accelerated in every area. All assistance and support must be provided to the individuals and organizations that were appointed by the central administration to carry out the required tasks. The Presidential decree clearly determines the tasks.

Within the territory of the county, the following tasks are to be done apart from the already mentioned:

- Early registration of the population (composition of families, age, occupation, nationality, qualification, social status, etc.)
- Estimating the required labor force, occupational distribution and evaluation of requirements.
- Definition of the new functional districts. Estimating the requirements of skilled labor, with special attention to industrial capacity.
- To achieve the goals of the project, residents need a structured reorientation. In this task local People's Council and the emerging new People's Councils and divisions of Party organizations will have a special role. The police will be in charge of public order.
- The new building area must be secured and the dismantled area must have protective measures to avoid encroachment during the building phase.
- Each citizen has to be given a job somewhere in the country. With this step we want to guarantee each Romanian citizen the right to work. If the citizen does not want to take the assigned position, this does not exempt the citizen of the obligation to move to the designated residence. Refusal to move or placing stumbling block against moving endangers the great socialist transformation of our country, and requires appropriate measures on part of the authorities wish to accept the position granted to him or her, he or

she is not exempted from the obligation to move to the previously marked region and dwelling place. Denying moving endangers the socialistic reformation of our Homeland; therefore, the authorities are obliged to make the appropriate measures against it.

- Each citizen must be granted the chance to voluntarily undertake to move and accept a position, for a certain period of time, in the resettlement areas.
- Proper provision must be made citizens moving, including food supply and other social services (health care, school, kindergarten, etc.).
- Moving requests for multiple families is only possible within the framework of voluntary moving. In case of non-voluntary moving, we must insist on strictly adhering to the requirements of the economy and the regional experts. The proximity of relatives is not reason enough to ignore the strict principles of moving to the designated residence.

As for ownership matters, our guiding principle is that all land within the territory of our beloved Homeland Romania are state property; therefore, they are exclusively managed by the state.

As for the ownership and breeding of animals, a separate amendment of the decree will be drafted, considering the resettlement project and the formation economic areas. The areas have to strive to become self-supporting.

We have an enormous set of tasks before us – the creation of nearly 500 industrial agro-biological complexes – but this is endangered by the neighbouring People's Republic of Hungary by attempting to thwart the development our socialist society.

The chauvinistic Hungarian Government does not consider the reality of socialism, the fact that our dear Homeland Romania lead by its great and faithful son Comrade Ceaușescu is working on the realisation of a developed society. Nothing proves the anti-socialist nature of the chauvinistic Hungarian Government more than the fact that the heroic son of our Nation Comrade Ceaușescu, on occasion of his 70th birthday was awarded, on behalf of the Soviet party and state leaders, with the Order of Lenin. If the accusations about our beloved Homeland and its great leader Comrade Ceaușescu disseminated by the chauvinistic Hungarian political leaders were true, then he would not have been awarded with this order for building socialism. The award itself is the best example that the Romanian Government represents the socialist advancement, while the Hungarian leadership denies its greatness.

This is why the dialogue between the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and the Central Committee of Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party will take place only if in the future the Hungarian leadership:

- Desists in a policy of humiliation the Romanian Nation and its leaders.
- Desists in the shameful forgeries of history
- Ceases the interference in Romanian national internal affairs
- Commits to stop disinformation about Romania in the Hungarian press and literature, banning all writings and articles humiliating Romania
- Accepting the fact that that Romania has jurisdiction over any Romanian citizens, regardless of nationality
- Repatriates Romanian citizens illegally migrating to Hungary without preconditions
- Repatriates Romanian citizens who travelled to Hungary with official travel documents, and after the expiration of such documents did not return to Romania
- Strictly abides by the Treaty of Friendship and other important international conventions related to Romania
- Withdraws declarations that are against general principles of peace and international relations
- Initiates legal proceedings against those that express hostility against Romania and the development of socialism by the Romanian people.
- Makes a commitment to strictly abide human rights and enforces them. Guarantees housing and jobs to all residents of Hungary until de Millennium.
- Solves the issue of alcoholism and drugs, and ends illiteracy
- Commits not to violate Romanian territorial sovereignty
- Commits to best practices in economic relationships and takes notice that Romania cannot henceforth support the troubled Hungarian economy.
- Desists interfering in the affairs workers of Hungarian nationality living in the territory of Romania, and takes note of the protest of the Committee of Ethnic Workers.

The nationality has been solved in the socialist Romania, since laws guarantee rights and the ethnic minorities can have their own journals, schools, cultural institutions and book publishing houses.

Under the leadership of Comrade Ceaușescu, the heroic son of our beloved Romania, exemplary cooperation developed with the workers of German nationality in Romania. Those who wanted to leave our beloved Homeland Romania could leave it on condition that the German State taking them will permanently contribute to their livelihood and that the state receiving emigrants pays to our homeland the social cost of services such health care and education.

We do not exclude similar mutually agreed upon solution for a determined number of Romanian workers of Hungarian nationality. Certainly, Hungary should defray with convertible currency the social expenses of each emigrant. The People's Republic of Hungary would provide proper jobs and housing for the immigrants. The Romanian contracting party should have access to the emigrants to ensure their welfare. Only under these conditions would the Highest Council consider taking away their Romanian citizenship.

The Romanian people have manifested great patience towards the Hungarian people under the direction the prominent personality of our Comrade Ceaușescu. We hope that the Hungarian leadership will finally recognise their mistaken policy and will cooperate with our people in the interest of social and economic progress and independent socialist development.

Both party and state leaders are responsible for their people, for history, and for humanity. Based on this, we cannot renounce from furthering our economic and social development and we cannot allow ourselves to leave the path of building socialism, the modification of our economic and regional landscape to allow the elevation of our people. This is why we have redouble our efforts to carry out as soon as possible the resettlement and economic plan. To achieve this we have to mobilize our people, our party so that we can stand up as one man for the sake of the flourishing of our beloved Homeland the Socialistic Romania.

Secretary General of the RCP
Central Committee of the RCP
Secretariat of the RCP

Classification Clause:

The material is top secret, made exclusively for the highest state and party leadership with a determined serial number, in a number of copies indicated below; therefore secrecy guidelines must be followed in handling this material.

‘Because the above cited documents were undated, we can have assumptions about it. On the one hand, the supplement refers to the fact that “the resettlement should be accelerated from the 1st of July.” By indicating the day, the report itself also refers to a date in July. However, it is precisely known that the report was on the agenda of a meeting chaired by the Hungarian deputy minister of interior on 20th September, 1988. After discussing the report, the chairman summed up the discussions. As for the political situation, he established that the opinion of various communist parties was not completely the same about ethnic issues, and added that the socialist camp is not completely unified in evaluating these matters.

“The interest of our policy – he added – is to prove the anticipated negative consequences of the policy of the Romanian party, but at the same time, it must do its best to build legal contacts for cooperation and to develop in the direction of mutual understanding. At the moment, the manifold possibilities of strengthening contacts and the examination of communication methods are the most important factors. In this case, it is natural that national security agencies become more active, but despite this situation, we must react to the events in a moderate and sober manner. Therefore, we should be informed about different political events, not only considering the state security aspect. We can help the political leadership if we exploit our multiple opportunities of information and explore the realities based on facts, providing a clear picture for the decision-making”.⁴⁷

After the digressing on the role of security agencies, it is worth continuing the exploration of the embassy report mentioned above that summed up the history of the village destructions in 1988 until the end of the year.⁴⁸

By the summer of 1988, conditions were ready to begin the resettlement program, international protests also grew. The Romanian government was forced to consider this fact, even if they have not given up their plans. The protests had its results, even if ending the program was not a realistic expectation. The Romanian Government changed their tactics in several steps. At least they attempted to make the project more acceptable, but later they extended the deadline for the initiation of the program.

47 Secretariat of Deputy Minister of State Security's Files HASSSA 1.11.1. 27. b. 45-13/13/a/1988. Budapest, July 1988, pp. 174-183.

48 The present situation of village destruction plans. Proposal of Ambassador Szűcs, Pál forwarded to Péter Várkonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs. (A falurombolási terv jelenlegi állása. Szűcs Pál nagykövet felterjesztése Várkonyi Péter külügyminiszternek.) Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 12th December 1988.

In July and August, the Romanian regime tried to make the “resettlement project” more acceptable in two directions. On the one hand, with the control of propaganda, they tried to influence public opinion in a positive direction. The county authorities attempted to gain the support of the population with differentiated policies and tried to silence the protestors. The press justified the historical necessity of the program, as a natural process. Although the acceleration of the process seriously burdened the state, it served the interests of the population. At the same time, the use of the word “destruction” was prohibited; only “modernisation” and “development” could be mentioned. Later, from September on, among the arguments cited was that they intended to stabilise the village population in place, providing appropriate educational, cultural and health services for them. Towards diplomatic corps they emphasised that the process is voluntary, constitutionality sanctioned, and that buildings can be dismantled only with the permission of the citizens, and the whole exercise serves a humane process. In county Harghita, the first copies of applications in which a Székely villager requested the dismantling of his house to be replaced by new modern town-like dwelling in the settlement. This process was boycotted in Cehetel, Simonesti, Tipari, Timis and Bodovice. Another method was applied in Bodos, a small settlement in county Covasna: the local People’s Committee “asked for” the elimination of the settlement in the name of the local population, saying that the village had no prospects for development. Nationalistic propaganda was used among the Romanian population of villages in the Banat region: “the forces of the Romanian nation broken up by history must be joined again.” In several places, those who refused moving to village centres were threatened with sanctions.

These attempts were shielded from the public, as also was kept from the public the intended deadline of mid-August to complete the resettlement project. In county Maros, they wanted to eliminate 266 villages from 487. According to the plan, 91 small villages also would be reduced to 76.

In county Harghita, from the 264 villages were listed 110 villages for destruction. This network of Hungarian settlements goes back to the 14th century, and the churches were built in the 14-15th centuries. According to the original plans, after completion, the list of villages to be destroyed would have been published, and the nationwide execution of the urbanisation project would have begun from September. Public notification was delayed as a tactical ploy.

The first information was leaked in August and stated that that destruction program would not be begin in September, and only the

building of agricultural centres would start this year with minimal disruption and without the use of bulldozers. However, these plans were also delayed. That is why dismantling or destruction works did not begin in Transylvania.

Another tactical modification was observable from September, of 1988 in parallel with the delay of the execution of the plans. It is imaginable that only the name of the centre will remain from the villages to be integrated, that is, the little settlements nearby will be attached to agricultural centres. These settlements can lose their name and live on under the name of the central village. For example, the name of Chiurus, the birthplace of Sándor Kőrösi Csoma would be attached to Brates, a village quite far from Chiurus, and the village will officially become a "street" of Brates. If small villages are then eliminated, it is not a settlement, such as Chiurus that will be eliminated, only a street.

This "rearrangement" would subordinate centuries-old Hungarian villages with very young Romanian settlements. According to the plans, the small villages Borosneu Mic and Dobolii de Sus belonging to the village Borosneu Mare will be attached to the township Valea Mare to be established. Valea Mare is a village with about 1,200 inhabitants, and at the moment belongs to the town of Intorsura Buzului. It is a completely newly established settlement inhabited by Romanian majority. Borosneu Mic has 500, Dobolii de Sus has 300 inhabitants, both of them are Hungarian villages. Borosneu Mic is one of the most ancient settlements in the region, Balázs Orbán indicates it in an article published in Székelyföld that the village was registered with 16 gates in 1567.

Another similar plan of "reattachment" betrays the same intention of Romanisation. The authorities are preparing to attach the villages Lisnau and Bicfalau from township Uzon to Dobirlau. Dobirlau is a village with 1,000 inhabitants, all of them Romanian, but it gained the rank of township a few years ago. It was established in a forest clearing location. However, Bicfalau was an independent parish already in the 14th century, and Lisnau is a similarly ancient settlement, both of them are inhabited by Hungarians.

Another possibility that may soon be introduced is the slow choking of the condemned villages. Schools, shops, health service and transport would be eliminated in these settlements, and no new building permits or restorations would be permitted. This is a tool to compel people to move in the newly established centres. In county Covasna, there were at least 30 such small villages.

By September, the press was given instructions to slow the propaganda effort. They did not have to write about the different phases of

the execution anymore declared by Ceaușescu. Later, 2010 was cited as the final deadline for completing the project instead of the previously indicated 2000.

At the full session of the Romanian Communist Party on 28-30th November of 1988, the secretary general was dealing with the village destruction plans relatively much. He emphasised that the plans must urgently be executed. In this sense, he strengthened the village destruction program. We can evaluate the situation like this, because the session passed the speech edited based on the “April Theses”. Ceaușescu in his April speech had spoken about the elimination of a few hundred townships and he said that it is necessary to eliminate 50 percent of the villages. He declared the plans must be finalized in a few months. The unchanged character of the final aim is indicated by the declaration in the speech given on 28th November that 558 agricultural-industrial centres would be established with the development of existing villages. At the same time – evidently for tactical reasons – he was speaking about the issues from different perspectives once again. He said that up to 1995 in the towns, and until 2000 in the whole country, in its main outline, the housing issue will be solved. Apart from his speech in March, he did not speak about the fate of the 13,000 villages, but only about the 2,300 townships to which administratively all the villages will be attached. Despite his speech given in April, he declared that the number of townships will be preserved, but he could do it easily, since if the village destruction project is completed, 6,000 villages will remain; that is, more than 2,300 townships. According to his declaration owners of houses outside the borders of the settlements do not have to destroy their houses, but new buildings can be built only within the borders. This also suggests a silent intention to go ahead with the village destruction project. In a village, a family can have a plot of 200-300 square metre, including the house, the courtyard and agricultural activities. These criteria can make for significant further changes possible, since there aren’t such small plots practically anywhere in the country. In the end, Ceaușescu said that the establishment of modern dwellings in the villages is an objective requirement to be provided by socialism, and he is convinced that serious steps will be taken in this field in the next decade. Ceaușescu spoke about assisting the population with building materials and credits, which reveals that the Government was aware that the available resources of the state are insufficient to carry out the resettlement plan and the population should take at least part of the burden.

In our opinion, the available record clearly expose the original intentions of the Romanian regime. It showed that it was not about a

withdrawal from untenable positions, but a tactical modification of the same. A decision was made about the application of deceptive methods and about delayed implementation of the project. Ceaușescu never said – although the deputation of the Christian Democratic Faction of the EU Parliament also encouraged him to do so – that he would give up on his plan of village destruction., When Ceaușescu was in power no decision was ever withdrawn; at best, some were not carried out.

Our main argument is that despite the many warnings, the village destruction project was not given up or withdrawn, and tactical steps did not deceive anyone in the rest of the world. We can also emphasise that Romania was also responsible for exaggerating press positions in the same way that was responsible for the original plans. Since they did not provide credible information and also refused any fact finding possibilities. At the same time, we have to bring to light other forcible and discriminative measures of assimilation against the ethnic minorities apart from the plans of village destruction, namely the cutback of native language education and the lack of cultural facilities, the exchange of population and the forcible relocation of students.

The popularisation of the program in the country or in Transylvania was conceivable. According to the regimes's economic plan of next year, (which next year?) 40,000 dwellings would be built in a rural environment, and according to the five-year plan, this quantity of flats will be doubled. This number was taken over by the propaganda after the extended session of the CC of the RCP on 28-30th November of 1988.

The mentioned report stating that “only tactical modifications were introduced, the decision was made about the application of deceptive methods and the delay of the beginning of the project” was supported by the events that happened next year. It is not only about villages to be eliminated would not be destroyed, but they would let them perish “on their own. (Süle 1990) The political leadership applied ever-increasing manipulative means when they tried to make people leave their ancient settlements on a voluntary basis. In the first phase, village assemblies were convened, and these assemblies “democratically” voted the integration of neighbouring settlements in certain counties. The integration of the settlements of mixed population required separate tactics. The “interests of assimilation” could also be realised on the other way round; that is, also Romanian villages could be integrated into villages of Hungarian population. These times, the remaining Hungarian population was “attenuated” by changing the original ethnic composition. Furthermore, on top of this, the decision-making process does not

follow the stated guideline whereby economically weaker settlements should be attached to stronger ones.⁴⁹

The open anti-Hungarian foreign policy of Romania could not lead to open military confrontation due to the still existing, although weak ties of the Warsaw Pact⁵⁰, while Moscow finally gave up the intention “to at least preserve the traces of peace between the two countries”. (Rip 2006: 503) The deadlock of the conflict can be dated to the weeks before Ceaușescu’s failure. News of more or less reliability of Romanian army arrived in the entire year⁵¹, but all of this was overcome by information out of Budapest published in the Austrian press according to which Romania had been preparing for military action against Hungary in the autumn.⁵² The same information could be obtained by the Hungarian ministry of the interior when the ministry warned the Politburo of the HSWP⁵³ about Romanian preparations of military action against Hungary in a background report on 19th June 1989. The Hungarian minister of defense was afraid of similar conflicts: “With my colleagues we concluded that that Ceaușescu clan, to preserve their power, may decide on adventurous steps, and it is not even excluded that they will take some aggressive, provocative steps against Hungary.” (Kárpáti, 2000)

The negotiations between the Opposition Round Table and the Soviet embassy in the second half of 1989 were noteworthy events of this

49 The cessation of townships in Maros county (Maros megyei községek megszüntetése). Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 10 May 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 77. b. 112/Szt/89.

50 Borhi, László: “It is Hungary’s duty to remain in the Warsaw Treaty – international connections of the changes in 1989 in the mirror of Hungarian sources („Magyarország kötelessége a varsói Szerződésben maradni” – az 1989-es átmenet nemzetközi összefüggései magyar források tükrében). Foreign Affairs (Külügyi Szemle), 1007. summer-autumn.

51 “After the rearrangement of the division of Moldavia that was done in the end of last year, in Transylvania where massive military forces were ordered from different areas of the country, the population gave information about military operations. At the same time, a serious number of reservist officers were called in.” HASSA Intelligence Reports. Romania in 1989 was planning a military offensive against Hungary. Allegedly they are convinced that they can quickly reach the line of the river Tisza unhindered before the Hungarian Army could mobilise its units in the Dunántúl region.” Daily Operational Reports, summarising reports 21 June 1989. HASSA 2.7.1. 062111.

52 Embassy of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Vienna, 3 August 1989. Secret Archives Files, Declassified documents, Austria 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 20. b. Foreign Office 003390.

53 The proposal of the Department of International Party Relations of the CC of the HSWP forwarded to the Presidency about our participation at the session of the Political Negotiating Body of the Warsaw Treaty held in Bucharest. 30 June 1989. NAH M-KS 288. f. 59/1.

period. For the first time, Russian ambassador Boris Ivanovics Stukalin visited the session of the Opposition Round Table in the Parliament on 18th August 1989. He replied to the question about the Hungarian population across the border diplomatically, without mentioning any concrete information: "We have to admit that on ethnic issues many deviations from the Leninist approach, were in evidence mainly in recent years."⁵⁴ Two days later Ivan Aboimov, the Soviet deputy minister of foreign affairs met with the representatives of the Round Table. On behalf of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) Jozsef Antall drafted a statement that may seem strange today. It stated that, if Hungary were to remain in the Warsaw Treaty Organization, (WTO) it can be a guarantee against attacks from neighbouring states, and naming Romania he said that "the possibility of attack cannot be excluded".⁵⁵

The session of the Political Consultative Committee of the WTO held in July 1989 in Bucharest gave an opportunity for the Hungarian and Romanian party leaders to meet. Upon the request of then HSWP chairman Rezső Nyers, the meeting was considered an "unofficial negotiation of comrades", the proceedings of which were not published.⁵⁶ The chairman of the HSWP brought up the issue of political relations between Hungary and Romania. As he saw it, since the bilateral summit meeting of Ceausescu and HSWP secretary general Grosz in August 1988 in Arad, had failed to improve but, on the contrary, reached a low point. In fact, no proposals of the Hungarian side had been answered and all were ultimately rejected. The declaration on nationalities planned at the meeting of Arad was not prepared while the debate over the resettlement program had international repercussions and was continuing. "It is true that this is a Romanian internal affair – Rezső Nyers added – but it generates nationality problems in nationality areas, transcends our borders and worsens our relations."

Ceausescu responded in a sharp tone by saying that Romania was an independent socialist state that solved its problems on its own. On this basis, the Romanian government would not permit the presence of

54 The session of the Round Table of the Opposition, the visit of the ambassador of the Soviet Union 18 August 1989 (Az Ellenzéki kerekasztal ülése, a Szovjetunió nagykövetének látogatása 1989 augusztus 18). In: The scenario of the change of the regime. Round table negotiations in 1989 (A rendszerváltás forgatókönyve. Kerekasztaltárgyalások 1989-ben) Vol 3. (editor: András Bozóki), Magvető, 1999, p. 245

55 Memorandum about the meeting of Ivan Aboimov with opposition politician 17 October 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Soviet Union/1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 84. b.

56 Nyers, Rezső's report to the Operative Committee of Political Affairs 10 July 1989. HSWP CC Information Reports. 1980-1989. NAH M-KS 288. f. 11. 890708, pp. 213-219

an international control commission to monitor the resettlement program. In his view, this Hungarian initiative amounts to nothing less than a deliberate attack on the friendship of the two peoples.”

Regarding the resettlement program, Ceaușescu said that such phenomena can also be observed in other places. The program was started 20 years ago, with the aim of improving the living conditions of village residents. He agreed with an earlier proposal that a Hungarian delegation should visit Romania in order to study the issue as soon as possible. He pointed to the fact that it was the Hungarians who did not want to receive a Romanian counterpart delegation; at the same time, the Hungarians were emphasising the control functions of their proposed delegation. International visitor rules designate the host country as organizer of the visitor’s programs. However, the Hungarian delegation might visit counties with a Hungarian majority, but visitors should experience the entire territory of Romania. Romania “is one of the few countries” – declared Ceaușescu – where, in the widest sense of the word, there is native language education, local and national newspapers are published in the language of the nationalities as well as functioning theatres.” He called it strange that these facts were not known in Hungary, or if they were known, then the Hungarians distorted these facts. The Romanians would like, he added, “that Hungarian citizens of Romanian descent would enjoy the same rights as the nationalities in Romania.”

At the height of these inconclusive and essentially futile negotiations, Nyers commented that “along the Hungarian-Romanian border, tourists are literally undressed, and even the newspaper *Népszabadság* (the HSWP’s official organ) was confiscated. Such incidents were not present in any of our other borders. (...) We consider the restriction on *Népszabadság* contrary to principles of free movement.” Ceaușescu’s response contained the usual phrases: Romania could not allow the import of press material containing views with which we could not agree. “If *Népszabadság* publishes only articles about Hungary, then it will be allowed in Romania. But if it promotes ideas of western socialism, arguing for the supremacy of the west, then it would not be allowed in.”

Despite the above, at the session of the HSWP Politburo on 24th July 1989 decided that a delegation of the Hungarian Parliament should travel to Romania in the near future to study resettlement issues, and with a similar purpose, a Romanian delegation should be received in Hungary.⁵⁷

57 NAH M-KS 288. f. 5/1072.

Hardly a week later, the proposal went nowhere. On 3rd August 1989, György Fejti received Romanian ambassador Traian Pop at his own request, and the ambassador handed to him the following memorandum from the Romanian Communist party and government:

The leadership of the Romanian Communist party and the government of the Romanian Socialist Republic considers the interview with Mihai, former king of Romania aired in the program "Panorama" of the Hungarian television on July 31st as an anti-Romanian, anti-socialist and fascist provocation, and a direct attack against the independence and sovereignty of Romania. In view of the nature of this action the leadership of the Romanian Communist party and the government of Romania vigorously protest to the leadership of the HSWP and the government of Hungary. At the same time the Romanian side wishes to convey that the following:

Romania withdraws the invitation for the visit of a Hungarian delegation to Romania.

The Romanian Ambassador to Hungary is recalled for consultations.⁵⁸

The continuing propaganda war evidently contributed to a darkened mood in Romania and helped reinforce reasons for not leaving the country, even illegally. This is why new regulations ostensibly issued to protect Romanian borders, but actually to stem illegal border crossings, caused an outcry in public opinion, but also in the Bucharest diplomatic corps.⁵⁹ The state council of the Romanian Socialist Republic in the middle of July (official bulletin 26. 17. 07. 1989.) with a decree No.170/1989 issued regulations regarding the use of weapons, munitions and explosive material in the border areas. With additional decrees, the regime issued regulations modifying earlier border control operations and conditions governing the use of firearms.

The Hungarian embassy's reaction to the new regulations was that in comparison with previous regulations, it was clear that Romania became even more stringent regarding restrictions in the border zones. By building the 'fences', Romania increased its isolation from the outside world. By increasing the restrictions of freedom of movement and tightening up the rules of transit made more stringent an already over-regulated border transit system affecting the resident population. The

58 Fejti, György's report to the members of the Operative Committee of Political Affairs about the negotiations with the Romanian ambassador.

59 The execution of the Cabinet Directive about the defence of the borders of Romania. Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary, Bucharest, 10 September 1989. Declassified documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1989. NAH XIX-J-1-j. 76. b. 171/Szt/89.

new ones did not define border crime, but it stated that “if the subject persecuted in the zone has committed a serious crime earlier and crossing the border would cause extraordinarily serious danger, firearms can be used against them.” This, in the last resort, meant absolute freedom in the use of firearms. These measures only strengthened the probability of the rumors that the cruel Romanian police and army would want to commit murder to prevent the flight of refugees into Hungarian territory. Such stories were not alien to public opinion, and the press was especially fond of publishing alleged or actual stories like these, some of which elicited international interest.

Instead of an Epilogue

The sources cited highlight the fact the complex problems associated with the migration process are truly a big challenge to both the Hungarian political leadership as well for all organizations, whether of the state or not, that participate in the execution of the relevant tasks. We can see today in the resolution of these tasks that changes in regulatory systems and institutional techniques, and perhaps even more the legal culture, are a little ahead of the changes in other areas of transformation of the constitutional state. This, of course, is related to the fact that the effective and humane management of refugee affairs was adapted to the prevailing legal order in harmony with the international human rights norms. At the same time we should be mindful of the fact that when the prevailing political interest demanded it, then, and depending on the situation, the application of the (international) legal standards could be placed in brackets.

But the international influence did not prove to be one-sided; hence, the experience was also useful the other way around. The appearance of Romanian refugees in Hungary and the solution of their situation is almost a model tableau for the new migration wave that started in the 90's, after the collapse of the communist system, already from 1988 onward. Therefore, those experiences learned Hungarian solutions strongly contributed to the fact that the Western European countries received the migration wave in a relatively – though with delay – more prepared manner. Finally, in spite of the various mistakes and occasional failures, the newly formed migration system answered unknown before challenges with essentially operational solutions more than 20 years ago.

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